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AN HYPOTHESIS ABOUT THE HEBREW FRAGMENTS OF SIRACH.

IT was a dream. The great discovery which so pleasantly excited all Biblical and Hebrew scholars, and which has exercised their learning and acumen for the last two years, proves to be an illusion. The fragments of Ben-Sira, published from the Geniza in Cairo, by Dr. Schechter and Dr. Neubauer, and more sheets of which are in Cambridge and the British Museum awaiting publication, are not portions of the Hebrew original of Sirach, and do not belong to the third century B.C., but are remnants of a re-translation of the Greek and Syriac Sirach into Hebrew. That translation was made in the eleventh century C.E. by a Persian Jew. This "Ben-Zew" of the eleventh century had become aware of the existence of the complete Sirach. He conceived the wish to recapture the work for "the dear Hebrew language," and in "honour of his race." He gets one teacher, who reads with him the Syriac Sirach, and another, who—for good "reward"—translates for him the Greek Sirach into Persian. The zealous Jew is intent next upon collecting "parallels from the Old Testament," in order to make use of them in his translation. Equipped in this way, he composes a Hebrew Ben-Sira, adapting himself at one time to the Syriac, and at another time to the Greco-Persian Sirach. During the process he becomes the victim of many misunderstandings and errors, but he occasionally succeeds in surpassing in correctness the two other versions, which constitute the only basis of his labour. "He restores the original felicitously once or twice where both versions are misleading." He records on the margin

other attempted translations of single words or of whole verses. Death prevents the completion of his work. His MS. falls into the hands of a pedant, who knows more Hebrew than the master; and who supplements the marginal notes of the translator with some poor and worthless emendations. This MS. was the basis of the fragments of the Hebrew Ben-Sira of the Geniza.

This is the romance pictured to himself by Prof. D. S. Margoliouth of Oxford, which is to take the place of the assumption that the fragments reproduce the Hebrew original of the Wisdom of Ben-Sira¹. It is evident that a grave scholar could only be induced by grave reasons to put himself into opposition to all those who hitherto have considered and discussed the Hebrew fragments of Sirach as the newly discovered original text of *Ecclesiasticus*, to assert the modern origin of this Hebrew text, and to deny it the alleged great importance for the understanding of Sirach, and for the history of Hebrew language and literature. As one of those who have given close attention to the fragments of Ben-Sira, I intend, in the following remarks, to examine the grounds which led Prof. Margoliouth to his astounding assumption, and to test their value.

As Prof. Margoliouth says himself (p. 4), the point of issue for his hypothesis was offered him by the Persian marginal note on fol. 1, right side, of the Oxford MS., which reads *מי מאנד כי אין נא בימנוכתי אצל בוד אילא נאkol מי נופת*. According to Prof. Margoliouth *נאkol*, i.e. is as much as “translator,” and the sense of the marginal note is: “It is probable that this was not in the original copy, but was said by the translator.” But Prof. Margoliouth leaves to conjecture what the note in question refers to. In reality, the Persian note is only the conclusion of a larger Hebrew note, which reproduces verbatim a passage of the Babylonian Talmud (*Sanhedrin*, 100 b): *כל ימי עני רעים* *בן סира אומר אף בלילא* *כרכמו לנרכמים*. According to the

¹ *The Origin of the “Original Hebrew” of Ecclesiasticus*, James Parker & Co., London, 1899, 20 pp., 4to.

explanation given by me in *Revue des Études Juives*, t. XXXVII, p. 310, the Persian note—whether written by the same hand which wrote the Hebrew, or by some other hand—refers to Talmudic quotations from Ben-Sira, which was written on the margin, and means: “It seems that this did not occur in any copy (of Ben-Sira), but that it was communicated, orally, by one who delivered the tradition¹.” The Persian glossator wishes to explain the fact that the apophthegm about the sad condition of the poor, mentioned in the Talmud in the name of Ben-Sira, did not occur in the present Hebrew Ben-Sira (indeed it is not to be found either in the Greek or in the Syriac version). That נאקיָל, *ndqil*, means one who delivers a tradition, need not be proved. In addition, I mention the expression شَرَحَ الْنَّاقِلُونَ in Maimûni's *Sefer Hammitsvoth* (p. 29, l. 7, ed. Bloch), where ناقلون is the same as the frequently recurring راویون (רַאוּיוֹן). The tradition itself is called النَّقل (النَّقل). The word המעתיקים, which is so frequently employed by Ibn Ezra, and which designates the bearers of the Tradition, is a rendering of النَّقل. Prof. Margoliouth will himself be obliged to admit that this explanation of the first Persian marginal note in the Oxford MS. is so natural and clear, that it excludes any other assumption of the meaning of the word נאקיָל. From the same hand as this note is also the other on fol. 5 verso, which reads: אין נסختה תא יתיר בוד, i.e. (vide *Revue des Études Juives*, ibid.), “this copy went thus far.” This note is placed where the *variae lectiones* at the margin of the fragments cease, and means that the copies of Ben-Sira, from which the *variae lectiones* were taken, did not go any further (xlv. 8). If Prof. Margoliouth had taken into consideration this note also, he would not have so misunderstood the nature of the *variae*

¹ I take נאקיָל as an abbreviation of אֲנַצֵּל, i.e. أَصْلَى, which, joined with the negative, means as much as “by no means.” It may, however, also be assumed that נאקיָל belongs to the preceding word, and that נסכת אֲנַצֵּל (نسخت أصل =) means “the original copy,” the original text.

lectiones, as he does in his hypothesis. According to the latter, this second Persian note has no sense whatever. The only meaning it can possibly have is this, that *variae lectiones* were added to the text of the fragments, which were taken from an incomplete copy, which went only as far as xlvi. 8, and which, of course, cease at that verse. But what is the meaning of the second note in the light of Prof. Margoliouth's hypothesis? It is absolutely unintelligible.

It will be seen from what has been said, that the Persian marginal notes, upon one of which Prof. Margoliouth bases his hypothesis, are not only inapplicable thereto, but offer an argument opposed to it. Nevertheless, I will disregard these notes altogether, and rather proceed to those proofs which he adduces, from the text of the Hebrew Sirach fragments themselves, in support of his view. I admit that some of them are capable of stupefying one at the first moment, and certainly testify to the acumen and intelligence of their author. But, on closer inspection, they cease to be formidable and lose their demonstrative force.

The most striking are those passages as to which Prof. Margoliouth assumes that the Hebrew Sirach becomes only intelligible if viewed in the light of a reproduction from a Persian draft, i. e. from a Persian translation of the Greek Sirach. In this he starts from the assumption that the Persian draft was written with Arabic-Persian letters. The most conspicuous among these passages is, perhaps, the following:—

xliii. 1 (p. 10). The Greek has *χιόνα*, the Hebrew in the same passage *רַבָּ*. “Snow” becomes “lightning,” because the author of the Hebrew erroneously read *ברַכָּ* (Arabic-Persian for “lightning”), instead of *ברַבָּ* (= “snow”), and put the Hebrew word *רַבָּ*, which is identical with the former. First of all, it ought to be stated—as Prof. Margoliouth has stated—that the “snow” is quite out of place here, and that the word *χιόνα* is a corruption

of old standing (the Latin version has also *nivem*). On the other hand, the "lightning" is here quite appropriate, and is, moreover, directly attested by זיקות (v. l. זיקים) in the second half of the verse (ἀστραπάς in the Greek¹). As a further proof for the reading בָּקָר there is the marginal v. l. בָּקָר, which is, of course, a corruption of בָּקָשׁ. But how this latter *varia lectio* is to be understood, according to Prof. Margoliouth's theory, is absolutely unintelligible. This applies, indeed, to most of the other marginal notes of the Hebrew Sirach fragments. It is not my business to explain how it came to pass that, in the Greek, "snow" was put instead of "lightning," limiting myself on this, as on all the other passages, to showing that Prof. Margoliouth's assumption is, in each case, either unnecessary or simply impossible.

xliii. 2 (p. 9) reads in Hebrew: שָׁמֶשׁ מִבְּעַד בְּעָרְתוֹ חֶמֶה. The Persian draft had, according to Prof. Margoliouth, rendered διαγγέλλων by سُخْنٌ افْشَانَدَنْ "to utter speech." The author of the Hebrew took سُخْنٌ in the Arabic sense of the word as "heat," and translated מִבְּעַד חֶמֶה. I shall not dwell on the fact that the phrase سُخْنٌ افْشَانَدَنْ is not attested (Vullers does not know it), for it is not impossible that it was used in the sense of "speaking." But it is most doubtful whether the Hebrew, which says in the second half of the verse that the sun on rising proclaims מה נורא מעשי י"י, should thus have misunderstood the phrase. In reality, we fare best if we consider the Hebrew as the original. I am of the opinion that ver. 2 a originally read thus: נְשָׁמֶשׁ מִבְּעַד בְּצָאתָו אָמָר. The expression אָמָר is taken from Ps. xix. 3 (יבָּעַד אָמָר). The Greek read instead of מִבְּנִיט (εἰπεν), and translates it ἐν διπτασίᾳ (looking=with the look); it also read אָמָר instead of אָמָר, and rendered it by διαγγέλλων (=announcing). But by an error, which is easily explained, נ was changed in the Hebrew into ח, and ר into ה, and

¹ Cf. Mishnah Ber. ix. 2: על הזיקים ... ועל הברקים.

² Cf. also the *varia lectio* in the Hebrew in the preceding verse (xliii. 1), מבט נהרה ("pours out light").

thus the word became חמה, an alteration all the more explicable by the nearness of the word שטח; thus the *varia lectio* has also מבצע מופע for מבצע. This disposes of the necessity of refuting what Prof. Margoliouth says about the ridiculous misunderstanding, of which in the Hebrew the word δπτασία became the victim. The word בצעתו (=ἐν ἐξόδῳ) is, of course, the original reading, for which in the Hebrew בצרתו was erroneously written.

The double יְרֵה in xlivi. 6 a (p. 10) is explained by Prof. Margoliouth in this way, that the Persian text had **بَا هَر** (=ἐν πᾶσιν in the Greek), which was read as one word **بَاهِر**, which sometimes means "moon." But **בָּהִיר** (cf. **בָּהִיר**, Job xxxvii. 21) can be at the best only an attribute of the moon, and the Hebrew could not render this by a noun, since the noun **יְרֵה** precedes it, but he would have probably put the Hebrew **בָּהִיר** or a similar adjective.

In the same section of the verse the Greek has *εἰς κατρόν αὐτῆς*; according to Prof. Margoliouth, the Persian translator rendered this by بار بار, an expression which I consider to be very problematical; Prof. Margoliouth proceeds that the Hebrew text, and two marginal notes in the Hebrew had their origin in this expression; the correct reading بار بار produced the Hebrew *תְּעַרְבָּר*; the reading *תְּעַרְבָּר*, and the reading *בְּרַבָּר* (again very problematical), (Prof. Margoliouth does not explain why it should be in the plural). But for the second section of the verse the Persian draft also offered the opportunity for amusing misunderstandings, for *χρόνων* was rendered in the Persian translation *آمد* (plur. *آماد*), an Arabic word which means "period" and also "end," hence *רֹב* in the Hebrew. The preceding word *ἀνάδειξιν* was rendered in Persian by *نمودن*, which not only means "to show," but also "to order"; hence in the Hebrew, influenced by Gen. i. 16, *תְּשַׁלְּמָה*. Thus the verse offers quite a load of misunderstandings. to assume which a strong faith is required. It will be more advisable, and, at the same time, easier to consider the Hebrew as the original, and to solve the difficulties in another

way, rather than to have recourse to such artificial hypotheses.

xlii. 17 c (p. 11). Greek ὡς πετεινά, Hebrew פְּרוּשָׁ. Prof. Margoliouth completely ignores the possibility of the two expressions agreeing, and that פְּרוּשָׁ may mean winged beings, birds¹. He prefers assuming that the Persian translator rendered the Greek word by پرواز, which means "flight" (*volatus*, properly *alarum solutio, separatio*, Vullers). There is no reason why he should have employed an abstract word for translating a concrete word. Nor is there any reason why the Hebrew should have understood that Persian word in its other meaning (*lumen, splendor*), and have employed a word (פְּרוּשָׁ) for its rendering, which is of very rare occurrence, and never has the meaning of "splendour." Still less obvious is it why the Persian should have translated the verb πάσσει (to scatter) by شکستن, which means "to break." The Persian translator used it, according to Prof. Margoliouth, in the sense of "to scatter," and the Hebrew took it to mean "to shake," and rendered it by נִיר. But the Persian verb can have either meaning only metaphorically. The word καθιπτάμενα in the Greek is disregarded by the Hebrew.

xlii. 22 b (p. 12). The word רַשֵּׁן in the Hebrew text arose thus. Ἰλαρώσει is translated into Persian by چربی (*mansuetudo, lenitas, clementia*), and the Hebrew took it in its first meaning (*pinguetudo*), and rendered it by רַשֵּׁן. In the same passage the marginal note to שְׁבָב is רַטָּב; this, according to Prof. Margoliouth, must be understood in this way, that the Hebrew read in the Persian translation سراب instead of شراب, which properly means "drink," and translated it by רַטָּב (moisture, damp). These are unnecessary hypotheses. They rest upon the assumption that, in this sentence, the Greek is "fine and clear," the Hebrew "ludicrous." In my opinion, it is just the Hebrew, if correctly

¹ Vide my remarks in *Revue des Études Juives*, XXVIII, 151 sq. Rashi explains לְרוּשִׁים Ps. lxxviii. 48 לְטוּפָת; Ibn Ezra רְשָׁעִים Deut. xxxii. 24 אֲכָלָת שָׁעָם.

understood, that gives excellent sense. Only, that the word פָּרוּעַ must be taken in a sense which it does not have elsewhere, but which is nevertheless attested by the Aramaic בְּפָרִיעַ (=Hebr. מְהֻרָה, מְהֻרָה). It having been said in ver. 21 that all vegetation is being parched by the heat of the sun, we read in ver. 22:—

מְרַפֵּא בְּלִ מְעַרְף עַנְיָן
טַל פָּרוּעַ לִרְשָׁן שְׁרָב

“Healing for everything is what the cloud leaves, the dew comes quickly to make the glowing desert green.” מְעַרְף is a noun formed from יָעַרְף (Deut. xxxii. 2) to designate the rain springing up in the cloud; unless we read מְעַרְף and take עַנְיָן as its subject. For לִרְשָׁן cf. דְּשָׁן, Ps. lxv. 12, which denotes “luxuriant vegetation,” and קְשָׁן, Ps. xcii. 15, denoting “luxuriant growth of trees.” (For instances of this use of the word in post-Biblical Hebrew, vide Levy, I, 430a.) שְׁרָב has the same meaning here as in Isaiah xxxv. 7. Besides the suggested explanation of פָּרוּעַ (cf. Ps. cxlvii. 15 עַד מְהֻרָה יְרוּזָן דְּבָרוֹ), I would suggest an alternate one, based upon a slight alteration. I read טַל, an expression which must have existed; for we read in a passage, referring to God’s beneficent deeds, and which has a strong resemblance to our passage in Sirach: וְהַקְדּוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא מַשְׁבִּיךְ רֹוחָות וּמַרְיוֹד נְשָׁמִים וּמַפְרִיחַ טְלִילִים וּמַנְדַּל צְמָחִים (Pesikta, ed. Buber, 99 a, in a Baraita of the Tannaite Nehemiah), idem, ib. 69 a and parallel passages from Jannai, one of the oldest Amoraites¹. טַל פָּרוּעַ corresponds with גַּשֵּׁם יוֹרֵד. It is not here the place to discuss the way in which the Greek translated this passage, so clear and beautiful in Hebrew. At all events he read לִרְשָׁן, and translated it in a metaphorical sense by ἰλαρόω. Cf. Prov. xv. 30, where תְּרַשֵּׁן stands parallel to οὐεῖν.

xliv. 8 b (p. 18). Prof. Margoliouth’s Persian translator rendered ἐκδιηγήσασθαι ἐπαίνους (“to recite praise of the dead”). The Hebrew read מִירָת instead of

¹ *Die Agada der paläst. Amoräer*, I, 43.

مراث, and translated it **נהלתם**; regarding the word he vacillated as to the right reading; once he read استناد, which he rendered **להשענות**, at another time انشاد, and then placed the corresponding term **להשענות** in the margin. Very witty, but highly improbable. مراث, the plural of مرניתה, means "lamentation for the dead," also "elegy," but the word would hardly have been chosen for the rendering of *ἐπαλνούς*. Much more simple is the assumption that **נהלתם** in the Hebrew is a corruption from **תהלך**. In the same way **להשענות** is evidently a corruption for **להשענות**, as given in the margin. Nobody who managed Hebrew so well as the author of the Hebrew text, even in Prof. Margoliouth's opinion, would have chosen such a monstrous form instead of **להשען**.

xliv. 10 b (p. 18). Greek **δικαιοσύναι**, Hebrew **צדוקותם**. According to Prof. Margoliouth, this alteration from "piety" into "hope" arose thus, that the Persian translator rendered the Greek word by **تَقْوَى**, and the Hebrew, misled by the similarity in sound, translated it by the Hebrew word for "hope." Too great a carelessness is attributed here to the Hebrew author. It is much easier to assume that the Greek had before him the original reading **צדקה** (more correctly **צדוקותם**).

xliv. 17 d (p. 18). The assumption that arose from the Arabic **عَهْد** in the Persian translation, which word means both "time" and "covenant," is not sufficient for deriving the Hebrew text from the Greek. At all events the Hebrew makes here better sense than the Greek; for בבריתו היה שארית **חדל מבול** is the natural continuation of בעבورو היה שארית **חדל מבול**. The Syriac must also be understood as a paraphrase of the Hebrew ("God swore unto him, that there would be no more flood"). ברית is, of course, an allusion to Gen. ix. 11.

xlvi. 11 (p. 19). Greek **σσων οὐκ ἐξεπόρνευσεν ἡ καρδία**; Hebrew **כל אשר לא נשא לבו**. Prof. Margoliouth thinks that the Persian translator employed the Arabic verb **فَجَرَ**, which the Hebrew read as **שָׁגַר**. This most artificial hypothesis becomes unnecessary, once it is understood (vide *Revue des*

Études Juives) that we must not read נִשְׁאָן (or נִשְׁאָן), but נִשְׁאָן, which the Syriac renders by נִשְׁאָן, in the same way as the Peshitta renders הַשְׁנִיאִי, Gen. iii. 13, by אַטְעִינִי, and הַשְׁנִיאִי, ver. 3, by אַטְעִינִי. The Greek translator is more free, but in the same sense (cf. לְבַם הַוֹּנֶה, Ezek. vi. 9).

We see that in most of the passages discussed thus far, Prof. Margoliouth operates with Arabic words, which figured in the vocabulary of the Persian translator posited by him. In the same way he attributes to his Ben-Zew of the eleventh century Arabisms which he supposes him to have employed in his re-translation. Such Arabisms are, according to Prof. Margoliouth: xl. 26 (p. 7), Greek βοήθειαν, Syr. מעדרנא¹, Hebrew מעין, which he believes to be nothing else but the Arabic مُعَيْنٌ, “helper.” But it is only Smend who believed that the word, the ה of which is entirely obliterated, ought to be read as עַם. Lévi only finds traces of the initial letter ה, but no trace of the other two letters, and adopts my suggestion עַשְׁמָן. However this may be, it is quite out of the question that the author of the Hebrew text should have expressed a notion, to express which the Hebrew language is particularly rich, by a purely Arabic word, the participle of an Arabic verb.

xliii. 9 (p. 5). Greek κόσμος φωτίζων; Hebrew מִזְהִיר, with the *varia lectio* מִשְׁרִיק. Prof. Margoliouth assumes the verbs both of the text and of the *varia lectio* to be Arabisms: مُزْهِرٌ and مُشْرِقٌ being equivalent to the Greek verb φωτίζω. Here also the same objection applies as to the preceding conjecture. The Hebrew would not have resorted to Arabic verbs for an idea so easily to be rendered in Hebrew; which verbs, by the way, are not such as to suggest themselves in the first instance. Nor does Prof. Margoliouth explain how מִזְהִיר originated in the Hebrew text. As a matter of fact, the *varia lectio* has preserved here the original text, for עַל, “ornament” (κόσμος), is parallel with the preceding expressions הַדָּר (κόσμος), and נִתְחַנֵּן. As to מִשְׁרִיק, it will have to be considered as

¹ Cf. Septuagint and Peshitta to Gen. ii. 18 (τρόπος) βοήθόν, מעדרנא.

a most remarkable Arabism of Ben-Sira. But it can, perhaps, be disposed of by a conjecture, which would, moreover, explain the *varia lectio*. Ben-Sira wrote, perhaps, עָדִי מַצְחֵב, "glittering ornament" (cf. Mishna Middot, ii. 3 נְחַתֵּן מַזְהִב, or מַזְהִב (vide Levy, IV, 175 b). This could easily have been altered into מַזְהִיר. On the other hand, it is hard to understand how or מַזְהִב was turned into מְשִׁיר. Is it possible to assume a verb to שָׁרֵך, Zech. i. 8? וְאָרוּ is an apparently explanatory alternative to וְעָדִי.—Prof. Margoliouth suggests also a double Arabism, similar to the one in xlivi. 9, in the immediately preceding verse, where the Hebrew text reads מַרְצָף, and the marginal note has מַעֲרֵץ. Both words are Arabisms, according to Prof. Margoliouth. I need not again point out that it is unnecessary to go back to the Arabic to find the meaning of "meeting gaze" in the word מַעֲרֵץ, for the Hebrew word פְּעָרֵץ has that meaning in Isaiah viii. 13. As to מַרְצָף, cf. *Revue des Études Juives*, t. XXXVII, 314.—A few verses before Prof. Margoliouth finds two Arabisms (xlivi. 4 c), one orthographic and another lexicological. The spelling of לְשָׁאוֹן instead of לְשָׁן (thus *v. l.*) must have arisen from a combination of the Hebrew word with the Arabic لَسْمَان! And תְּגִמָּר is "both in form and meaning pure Arabic." But תְּגִמָּר is much better explained from the Aramaic גִּמְרָא, "a coal," than from the Arabic نُّجَمَّر. Even if taken as synonym to בְּלָה (בְּלָה = גִּמְרָא) it would make better sense.

The following passages are explained by Prof. Margoliouth by the assumption that the Hebrew translator based his work not only upon the Persian version of the Greek Sirach, but also upon the Syriac text.

xli. 12 (p. 14). The Hebrew אֲצָרוֹת חַכְמָה accords with the Syriac סִימְחָא דַעַתָּא (the Hebrew for which would be אֲצָרוֹת חַכְמָה). But the author of the Hebrew text did not recognize in the word דַעַתָּא the noun עַתָּה, to which the particle ד is joined, but took דַעַתָּא to be equivalent to the Hebrew דַעַת, but did not render this by its Hebrew equivalent, but by

חכמתה ! Is it not much more simple to assume that the *varia lectio* to חכמתה, namely חמתה, was the original reading, and that the Syrian understood this חמתה *in malam partem* (cf. Exod. xx. 16, Mic. ii. 2), as illegitimate covetousness of other people's property ? The Greek must have read חרין (χρυσίον).

xlvi. 11 e (p. 15). Hebrew מקום תנור אל יהי אשנב. This section of the verse, if connected with the second section, makes good sense. "The place where she abides let there be no lattice," namely, to look out (vide Judg. v. 28). But Prof. Margoliouth considers this as meaningless, and prefers assuming a foolish misunderstanding. In the Syriac the half verse reads: אחר דעתمرا לא תשבקה נפקא. The Hebrew read תשבקה for תשבקה, and this was a Syriac Arabism (تشבקה), "provided with bars"; he connects נפקא with the next section of the verse. I abstain from further discussing Prof. Margoliouth's explanation, but decidedly deny that the Hebrew can only be understood in the way he suggests. Unfortunately, the whole passage is missing in the Greek.

xlvi. 2 b (p. 16). מה נורא מעשי יי"ה: "How wonderful is God's work!" These are the words which the Sun proclaims on rising. The sense is so natural that it is astonishing that Prof. Margoliouth prefers the Greek and the Syriac: σκεῦος θαυμαστόν, ἔργον ὑψίστου, מאנא דתדרוּתָה דמְרִימָא: עבדה: "Wonderful vessel, work of the Most High!" This gives no unexceptionable sense, either taken by itself or in connexion with that which precedes. But Prof. Margoliouth is of opinion that the Hebrew misunderstood the Syriac מאנא, which he took to be an interrogative particle, and rendered by מה. Exactly the opposite must be assumed. By an error (probably of hearing) the Greek mistook מה פורא, as if it were צו נורא. The Syriac was here not taken from the Hebrew, but from the Greek.

xlvi. 9 (p. 17). Prof. Margoliouth explains the plural in the Greek text (ἄστρων) so that the plural in Syriac صەخدا was read without the points, and taken as a singular.

It is much easier to assume that the Hebrew also originally had כוכבים, and that this was subsequently abbreviated.

xlvi. 20 (p. 13). Greek τὴν τελευτὴν αὐτοῦ: Syriac אורה. According to Prof. Margoliouth, the latter was preferred by the Hebrew, who had both versions before him, and he rendered אורה by דרכיו. But most probably the original reading in the Hebrew was אחריתו, which was erroneously read by the Syriac as ארחתו, whereas the Greek translated τελευτήν.

xlvii. 6 c (p. 17). בעתותו צניף נלחם. This arose, according to Prof. Margoliouth, through a combination of the Greek and Syriac. But the Hebrew bears here the stamp of originality. צניף is the royal diadem (Isa. lxii. 3 אניף מלכיה); נלחם is the introduction, required for the second section of the verse, ו. מסביב הכנע צר. In the Syriac the translation of בעתותו is missing, whilst צניף is rendered by בלי, “diadem,” which was turned into קלייל אתכתש (קלייל, “he fought a little”), so as to establish a sense with the following words. The Greek has no translation of נלחם; or, rather, the translator read another word for נלחם, which he translated δόξης.

Besides those mentioned here, Prof. Margoliouth discusses a few other passages, for the purpose of showing that the Hebrew is less intelligible than the Greek and the Syriac, and cannot be considered as the original. Such a passage is xl. 16 a (p. 8), בקרדומות על נחת נחל; Greek, ἀχεὶ ἐπὶ παντὸς θύλαρος καὶ χείλους ποταμοῦ; Syriac, ואיך חבלבלא דיעת על נרנפה דנהלה. Prof. Margoliouth is of opinion that the Hebrew original ought to have had שון, because the Greek has ἀχεὶ. But neither has the Syriac that which we should expect as a translation of שון (Job viii. 11). The rare word employed in the Hebrew shows rather that this is no re-translation. Prof. Margoliouth, indeed, attributed to the Hebrew the absurdity of having used קרדומות in the meaning of “axes” (Ps. lxxiv. 5), and ignores the existence of a Mishna word קרומית (keromith), which means a sort of rushes (vide JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, IX, 559), and which

undoubtedly is meant here. The Greek translator could very well have selected for this the word ἄχει, which is of Egyptian origin; for this was for him not a "Coptic word," but was well known to him from the Greek version of Gen. xli. 3, 18, which was also familiar to his readers. What meaning the axe can have here after this hypothesis, and how it was possible for ἄχει to be misunderstood, cannot, of course, be easily explained by Prof. Margoliouth.

Meaningless appears also to Prof. Margoliouth xliii. 24 (p. 8), יְרַדִּי הַיָּם סְפִּירָה קָצֵחַ, "they that go down to the sea tell of its bounds." This translation, as given by the editors (Mr. Cowley and Dr. Neubauer), is made by Prof. Margoliouth the subject of a sneering criticism, as if, literally, the end, the boundary of the sea were meant, about which, of course, those who go down to the sea are not wont to tell. But קָצֵחַ does not mean here the boundary of the sea, but a part of the sea (cf. קָצֵחַ, Num. xxiii. 17, opp. בָּלָה, קָצֵות דְּרַכֵּי, Job xxvi. 14. The seafaring man tells only a part of the wonders which the sea offers, and we are astonished at that which our ears hear.

To xliii. 10 (p. 10), vide JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, IX, 552; *Revue des Études Juives*, XXXVII, 314.

I believe that I have sufficiently proved that the grounds which Prof. Margoliouth adduces, in support of his hypothesis, as sketched out above, have no validity. I do not dwell upon the facts that the passages examined by Prof. Margoliouth are only a small minority, and that, in spite of the acumen and ingenuity displayed in his inquiry, he has not been able to dispose of a single difficulty, of the many which a number of passages of the Hebrew text offer, both on their own account and in their relation to the two ancient versions. Nor will I enumerate the positive grounds which point to the originality of the Hebrew fragments of Sirach,

and are opposed to Prof. Margoliouth's theory of a re-translation; among which the strophic character, the pure parallelism, of our fragments would not occupy the last place. The most ingenious re-translator would not have been able to carry this through, if merely guided by translations. I am content with having shown the untenability of Prof. Margoliouth's arguments. It is not the hitherto generally adopted view of the character of the Sirach fragments, as the genuine original of Sirach, which is an illusion; but it is the hypothesis of Prof. Margoliouth, which rose, like a soap bubble, from the Sirach inquiry, only to burst after a short brilliancy.

W. BACHER.

BUDAPEST, *June, 1899.*

POSTSCRIPT.

I have nothing to add to the foregoing article, which was written before the appearance of the Cambridge fragments edited by Prof. Schechter and Dr. Taylor. In a special excursus to this splendidly-edited work, Dr. Taylor proves that Prof. Margoliouth's arguments are untenable. Prof. Smend, in a review of the Cambridge volume (*Theologische Literaturzeitung*, Sept. 1, 1899, No. 18, p. 505), also writes, with reference to Prof. Margoliouth's hypothesis: "Dass wir auch in der neuen Handschrift das hebräische Original und nicht etwa eine Rückübersetzung vor uns haben, ist evident."

Only one of the most zealous and successful of the investigators of the earlier fragments published by Dr. Neubauer and Mr. Cowley—M. Israel Lévi—has now arrived at a different conclusion. He says (*Revue des Études Juives*, tome XXXVIII, p. 308), with intelligible regret: "Hélas, il faut nous rendre à l'évidence: le texte hébreu, qui a son intérêt, ne saurait plus être considéré comme l'original; il peut uniquement servir à le reconstituer." My honoured

friend thus returns to the sceptical view which he expressed (*Revue des Études Juives*, XXXII, 303) after the publication of the first page discovered by Prof. Schechter, though on other grounds than are supplied by Prof. Margoliouth. M. Lévi will probably soon publish the reasons that have led to his conversion. He only gives a single argument which seems to him to have decisive weight against the originality of the Hebrew Sirach, and forces him to hold that the text is a retranslation which must be ascribed to a Jew whose mother-tongue was Arabic. This argument he finds in the verb חָלַק, which occurs twice in the Oxford edition: טֹוב לְטוֹב חָלַק מִרְאֵשׁ (xxxix. 25), and סָכָךְ נְדוּלָה חָלַק אֶל (xl. 1). In both cases the Greek and the Syriac have a verb which signifies "create" (*κτίζειν*, *جَعَلَ*). Lévi holds, following the lines of Prof. Margoliouth, that the Hebrew retranslator rendered the versions by the Arabic for "create" خلق, written *حَلَكَ*. Now such an assumption is in the highest degree improbable, if not impossible. It is scarcely thinkable that an eleventh-century Jew, so skilful a Hebraist as the author of the Sirach fragments certainly must have been, should use an Arabic word for the idea "create" instead of the common Hebrew verbs יָצַר, בָּרָא.

Secondly, consideration must be given to the fact that an Arabic Jew of the eleventh century would not have transliterated خلق by *حَلَكَ*, but by *بَلَكَ* (see my remarks in *Z.D.M.G.*, XXXVII, 458). On the other hand, if we accept the Hebrew as original, the verb חָלַק presents no real difficulty. It may be explained on the hypothesis that the Hebrew verb חָלַק had anciently the same meaning as the Arabic verb with a similar sound. We have thus to deal here with an ancient Arabism. In point of fact, Jerome in rendering *חָלַק*, Deut. iv. 9, writes "creavit" (see *J. Q. R.*, IX, 549). As applied moreover to God, the senses to "allot" and to "create" are not widely different. I hold, therefore, that it would be very rash, on account of isolated difficulties which the corrupt fragments of the Hebrew Sirach present, to allow weight to so unnatural and un-

tenable a hypothesis as that the Hebrew is a retranslation. It is antecedently improbable that it would have been necessary by means of a retranslation in the eleventh century to restore to Hebrew literature a work which was demonstrably extant in the original Hebrew so late as the tenth century. And the actual relations between the Cairene Hebrew and the versions speak for the originality of the former.

The further fragments published by Prof. Schechter supply fuller material for comparing the Geniza text with the previously known citations from the Hebrew Sirach. As was at the outset probable, the character of the text presented by the citations of Saadia Gaon is now found to so closely resemble the fragments published by Prof. Schechter that it is sometimes altogether identical with the latter. This, however, is not the place to speak at length on these points. I shall find another occasion to express myself more fully.

W. B.

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